



**HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**  
**FINANCE RISK & CHANGE GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

**Meeting of the Finance Risk & Change Governance Committee held on  
Wednesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 10:30am in the Committee Room at The Henfield Hall.**

**Present:** Cllr J Jones (Chairman), E Goodyear, M Morgan, G Perry, S Leader, R Shaw and J Potts.

**In attendance:** Mr K Wright (Clerk) and Mrs R Grantham (Operations Manager - OM).

**MINUTES**

**1. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

Cllr Perry declared a personal interest in item 10, as a user of the Car Club and member of the steering group.

Cllr Morgan declared a personal interest in item 14, as Chairman of the Trustees of the Henfield Club.

**2. APOLOGIES**

None.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 16<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER 2024**

Approved. Signed and dated by the Chairman.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

a) Cemetery Lighting - Update.

The lighting heads have been replaced and are working as per the agreement, but it now appears that there is a fault in the underground cabling. A local electrician has suggested digging up the path to find the fault. It was agreed to try to find out the position of the cabling from the original installer. It was noted that no digging can take place that might disturb grave plots.

**Action Point: The Clerk to contact the original installer to ask about the positioning of the cabling.**

*The Chairman adjourned the meeting.*

**OPEN FORUM**

There were no members of the public present at the meeting.

*The Chairman reconvened the meeting.*

**5. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None.

**6. MOTION: TO APPROVE AN AMENDED DATA PRIVACY POLICY**

The previous version only applied to staff privacy. An amended version based on the model supplied by the Society of Local Council Clerks was circulated prior to the meeting.

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Goodyear and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the Data Privacy Policy.

**Action Point: The OM to update the website.**

**7. MOTION: TO APPROVE AN AMENDED DIGNITY AT WORK POLICY**

The new Worker Protection Act 2024 places a preventative duty on employers to prevent, in particular, sexual harassment in the workplace. An amended policy was circulated prior to the meeting.

The new law requires employers to take reasonable preventative steps and applies to all Councillors as individuals. The policy has been amended to reflect that employees can contact any Councillor with concerns, not just the Clerk, and that this can be done in an informal way if preferred and appropriate. The policy also mentions that all Councillors and staff will need to attend mandatory relevant training; it was suggested Personal Resilience training for staff and Civility and Respect training for Councillors.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Perry, **SECONDED** by Cllr Goodyear and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the amended Dignity at Work Policy.

8. **MOTION: TO APPROVE AN AMENDED HEALTH & SAFETY RISK REGISTER**

As above, an additional section relating to the Worker Protection Act 2024 has been added and amended version circulated. This particularly relates to staff working alone or late at night as well as the risks associated with dealing with the public. It was noted that the new law specifically relates to employers and employees rather than conduct between Councillors, but there are training modules available that can also deal with these issues. It was suggested that it might be helpful to attend training as a group to enable discussion of examples and sharing of anecdotes and experiences. It was noted that the recent installation of a video doorbell for the Parish Office to improve staff safety could be added to section four.

**Action Point: Cllr Goodyear to update section four and to highlight the changes for discussion and approval at Full Council in December.**

**Action Point: The Clerk to include on the agenda for Full Council in December.**

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Morgan and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve the amended Health and Safety Risk Register.

9. **MOTION: TO APPROVE A SWITCH OF HOURS BETWEEN WORKS OFFICERS**

One of the Works Officers has requested to reduce his hours from 20 hours to 15 hours per week, and another has requested that he is given these hours in addition to his own, taking him from 25 to 30 hours per week. This would result in extra costs of £73 per year in terms of salary, plus £772 in terms of pension for the staff member taking on the additional hours. The projected total staff costs are £202,538 and there is currently £205,000 allocated in the budget for next year.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Potts, **SECONDED** by Cllr Shaw and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to approve a switch of hours between Works Officers.

10. **CONSIDER FUTURE FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT SUSSEX**

A report from Community Transport Sussex (CTS) including costs and projected income for the Henfield Electric Car Club (HECC) was circulated prior to the meeting. The Parish Council currently contribute £4,000 per year to Community Transport Sussex (CTS), paid quarterly, for minibus trips by Henfield community organisations. A substantial amount of credit has been built up, which is likely to total around £8,000 by the end of this financial year, but CTS are proposing that £6,000 of the credit is allocated to HECC instead as well as a further additional contribution of £2,000 per annum. HECC currently has around 25 residents using the car with a volunteer driver for a variety of trips, including visiting friends and family, attending medical appointments and trips to the airport. The Committee expressed some concern as to whether the potential costs represent good value and also that trips to the airport may not be considered appropriate; HECC could be considered to be undermining local taxi firms for journeys of this type. Users of the scheme are not means tested. There were also some concerns about the lack of promotion and clarity about the scheme as well as its long term viability. It was noted that there is a concern that CTS may not have the resource to be able to deliver the minibus trips, despite the funding being ring-fenced. Groups are not able to use the bus for whole days on Mondays to Fridays during term time, because it is used for school runs. It was also noted that CTS are in discussion with Henfield Community Partnership (HCP), as CTS would prefer the scheme to be locally run. HCP are trying to assist CTS with obtaining larger grants. It was resolved by the Committee to await the outcome of discussion with HCP, leave £4,000 in the draft budget for the time being and to request a meeting with CTS to discuss further.

**Action Point: The Clerk to invite CTS to attend the next meeting of this Committee.**

**11. CONSIDER THE DRAFT 2025/26 BUDGETS, PRECEPT, PROVISIONS AND RESERVES**

A draft was circulated prior to the meeting. The Clerk explained that there is an additional cost of £6,500 for Employers' National Insurance due to the recently announced rise. Individual Committees have all discussed their budgets. The current draft represents an increase of 7% in precept, the tax on band D properties increasing by 6.8%. The precept increased by 10.5% last year. Cllr Goodyear explained that the budget for Computer Costs had been reduced to £5,000 from £15,000 in previous drafts, as it was felt that funding for a new website could potentially be taken from General Reserves. The Legal and Regulatory Costs budget has also been reduced as there is £9,300 in reserve for planning and legal costs. The Playing Field Maintenance budget has decreased as the Football Club are taking on more of this responsibility. There was a brief discussion on whether £6,000 for new signage represents good value for money. It was noted that it may be possible to reduce some provisions as some reserves have already reached their cap; these will be reviewed. Cllr Goodyear commented that she would be happier with a 6% increase in precept, Cllr Shaw suggested that following a 10.5% increase with a 7% increase seemed high. Cllr Morgan commented that Henfield residents have appeared to accept modest increases as the money is always spent for the benefit of Henfield. This Committee will need to agree on a formal recommendation at their next meeting, to be taken to Full Council in January. This current draft will also be circulated for general discussion at Full Council in December.

**12. CONSIDER A RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ENABLING REMOTE ATTENDANCE & PROXY VOTING AT COUNCIL MEETINGS**

Responses are being invited from anyone connected to a local authority. Councillors can and have been encouraged to respond individually. The Clerk confirmed he had not received any comments from Councillors towards a collective response, as requested at the November Full Council meeting. There was general agreement that attending meetings in person is preferable, but that flexibility and the ability for the Parish Council to make its own decisions and set its own guidelines would be very helpful. It was also agreed that hybrid meetings are particularly difficult, therefore either all online or all in person is preferable. There may also be additional costs of equipment to consider. All seemed in favour of proxy voting as long as motions and decisions needed are clear, straightforward and do not require debate or discussion, such as co-option of new Councillors. Due to the nature of the specific questions, it was felt that it would not be straightforward in a relatively short time to formulate a response that all Councillors would agree to, therefore Councillors will be further encouraged to submit individual responses.

Cllr Leader and Cllr Shaw left the meeting at 11.48am.

**13. ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING POINT INSTALLATION IN HENFIELD**

West Sussex County Council (WSSCC) are aware that the Parish Council are unhappy regarding the failure to consider the numerous objections to the locating of charging points at Fabians Way. They have still not removed the road markings which they admit were painted in error. Residents were very grateful for the Clerk's letter posted to explain the situation. With regards to the proposed installation at Wantley, the consultation has been publicised to local residents on social media and posters have been put up at the location concerned.

**14. CONSIDER PAYMENTS TO HENFIELD CLUB & ST PETER'S CHURCH**

It was **PROPOSED** by the Chairman, **SECONDED** by Cllr Goodyear and **VOTED ALL IN FAVOUR** to make payments of £200 to the Henfield Club for Remembrance costs and upkeep of the war memorial, and £500 to St Peter's Church for maintenance of the graveyard. It was noted that if the Church chose to stop maintaining the graveyard the responsibility would be passed to the Parish Council.

Cllr Morgan requested to raise an urgent matter as he needed to leave the meeting; all agreed. He stated that there has been a frustrating lack of communication from the WSSCC Active Travel Team, St Peter's School and WSSCC Cllr Sarah Payne over the last two years. The entire S106 transport funding for Henfield (over £60,000) has now been allocated to the Active Travel Team but no details on the project or how the money will be spent has been shared, despite regular requests for information and consultation with the Parish Council. It had been suggested that some of this funding could have been used towards flood warning signage at Mock Bridge. It is hoped that a meeting with WSSCC officers, Cllr Sarah Payne and the Headteacher can be arranged. The Clerk will continue to request information from Cllr Payne.

Cllr Morgan left the meeting at 11.57am.

15. **FINANCE**

- a) Confirmation of Reconciliation of Bank Accounts (October).  
Each signed and dated by two Councillors.
- b) Internal Controls (To Include Audit Check of Expenditure) – (October).  
Each signed and dated by two Councillors.

16. **ANY OTHER URGENT MATTERS TO BE RAISED BY COUNCILLORS**

In addition to the issue raised under item 14, Cllr Goodyear explained further that she and others had attended an on-site meeting at Mock Bridge, along with a WSCC Highways Officer and the Chairman of Shermanbury Parish Council, to discuss an active flood warning system that is directly connected to the fluctuating water levels. Next steps are to start a campaign, potentially a local petition and to start gathering evidence of the flooding. Quotes are also being obtained and the WSCC Highways Officer is also investigating further. He did advise that a long term solution to place warning signs at the road junctions north and south of the bridge are likely to take three years to implement; however it might be possible to have signage at the bridge itself much sooner. No response has been received to an email sent to MP Andrew Griffith.

Cllr Perry reminded Councillors about the Year of Biodiversity exhibition taking place at the Henfield Hall on 9<sup>th</sup> December. Cllr Goodyear will be speaking, along with others. The Costume Curator from the Museum will also be showing historical clothing made from natural fabrics. It is hoped that the mounted photographs can be displayed at the Hall afterwards, as well as at the Annual Parish Meeting. Cllr Perry will forward the promotional material to share on the Parish Council social media and website.

17. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

18<sup>th</sup> December 2024.

**Meeting Closed at 12.07pm.**